**Ways to Start Class, Get Focus and Assess Progress:**

**Roundtable Review**  
With this activity, I have students get out a sheet of paper and write a list of numbers from one to 10. Then I instruct them to put one important idea from the previous lecture on the first line. The paper is passed to the person on the left. Each time the paper is passed, the person receiving the paper writes a different idea. After a few minutes I call time, and the papers go back to the original owner. This makes a nice collection of ideas for future review and study.

Faculty Focus. <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/creative-ways-to-start-class-getting-students-ready-to-learn/> .Magna Publications, Inc- 2009. 2/17/10.

* Answer a question about yesterday’s work or another related topic;
* Respond to a statement or visual to uncover any misconceptions or to activate prior knowledge of the topic;
* Solve a quick brain-teaser or math problem;
* Complete a vocabulary entry with a graphic organizer such as a Frayer diagram;
* Do a “quick write” with several sentences on a theme or topic;
* Do a “quick draw” on a theme or topic;
* Put a few words on the board and ask the students to write a sentence using all of them; and
* Respond to a “this date in science history” or current event
* Frequent quick thumbs-up/down/sideways responses from students can give instant feedback during a discussion or activity. If you’re concerned this is a self-assessment, you can ask a thumbs-up student to explain briefly or use some probing questions with a thumbs-down student to find out the source of the confusion (which other students probably share, too).
* Some teachers use small white boards or half sheets of paper on which students write and display short responses and hold them up. A brief scan of the room lets you see the responses and know all students are involved. This is a low-tech version of the “clicker” systems that allow students to respond electronically for an instant check of student understanding. The advantages of the electronic system are that students may be more forthcoming is they feel their answer isn’t being broadcast to the class and you have a record of the student responses to analyze.
* In a variation of the think-pair-share strategy, students do a quick write in their notebook/journal, share their writing with a partner, and then summarize to the class. If the summaries start to sound the same after the first several ones, you can ask other teams if they have questions or anything new to add. As you listen to their summaries, you can get a feel for what students are learning, and the other students get to hear the information in different words or from a different perspective.
* Students could work on a graphic organizer or summary as a warm-up or a ticket-out-the-door activity to give you a glimpse into their thinking.
* When students are working in pairs or teams, you can walk around with a checklist of communications skills and lab behaviors or a notepad to record your observations to discuss with the class. Spend a little time with each group to observe their work, ask a few questions, or provide any clarification. This could also be a time to do a quick scan of some science notebooks.

Maryb. “Formative Assessments”, “Activities Get Students Focused.” *NSTA Blog-* 2009. <http://nstacommunities.org/blog/2009/03/08/activities-get-students-focused/> . 2/17/10.

Other Options: Logic Puzzles, etc.: [www.brainbasher.com](http://www.brainbasher.com)